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**'Great Places'**

State has received 145  
invitations already from places  
seeking partnership with state

**BY STEVE DUNN**  
**GATE CITY MANAGING EDITOR**

Several Southeast Iowa communities have already asked for state assistance to become "Great Places" through a new Iowa Great Places initiative.

A public meeting in conjunction with the initiative will be held at approximately 6 p.m. today at Keokuk City Hall.

About 75 coaches from throughout state government will be dispatched in teams to all the places that have submitted invitations. Coaches will work with the places this summer to help them move their Great Place visions forward.

Communities that have issued invitations so far include: the City of Montrose, Fairfield, Maharishi Vedic City, Mount Pleasant, Oskaloosa, Ottumwa, Pella and Washington. Historic Bonaparte Pottery in Bonaparte and Iowa's Great River Road, which includes Lee County, also have requested the state's help.

"The number - and the quality - of the invitations we received show the tremendous enthusiasm for Great Places," Department of Cultural Affairs Director Anita Walker said. "Iowans clearly accepted the challenge to think about what was genuine and authentic about their places and dream about what it would take to

"A great place connects its heart and soul - a lake, arts district, history, culture - with its trails and streetscapes and housing and parks. And it connects with you."

- Web site

make them great places."

Coaches will help places identify next steps and assess their readiness to present offers to the Great Places Citizens Advisory Board to be considered one of the pilot Great Places. The board will choose three pilots in early October.

"Each and every one of the 145 places that extended invitations will benefit from the Great Places initiative through the coaching process and new training opportunities," Walker said. "The three pilot Great Places will be part of our learning laboratory in this first year of Great Places, during which the state will explore coordinated, focused ways to deliver technical and financial assistance to deliver powerful results."

Gov. Tom Vilsack announced  
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# Governor announces initiative

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the Great Places initiative in his 2005 Condition of the State address. He also challenged **state agencies and Iowans to be bold and creative and develop new partnerships to turn neighborhoods, communities, districts, regions and other areas into great places where people want to live, work, stay and play.**

A team representing 18 state agencies designed a Great Places process, which started in May with 10 forums throughout the state. More than 1,000 people took part in the forums, where they learned about the opportunity to submit Great Places invitations.

The Web site [www.iowagreat-places.gov](http://www.iowagreat-places.gov) says "great places ignore county lines and city limits. They embrace the sense of place, the spirit that emanates from an authentic identity. A great place connects its heart and soul – a lake, arts district, history, culture – with its trails and streetscapes and housing and parks. And it connects with you.

"Great places can be pretty or gritty, high arts or street-corner strange. Their power, their greatness, lies in their ability to turn a visit or a residence into an experience."